

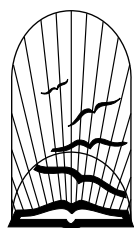
Mid-Michigan Reads is sponsored by:



CMU Friends of the Libraries

Friends of VML

Harrison Friends of the Library



*Michigan  
Center  
for the Book*

Robert and Geraldine Krapohl  
Literacy Fund, a fund of the

**Mt. Pleasant Area**  
community foundation



Mid-Michigan Reads 2006

989-774-6422 or 989-386-6616

[www.mmreads.org](http://www.mmreads.org)

## Mid-Michigan Reads 2006

A Community Read Project

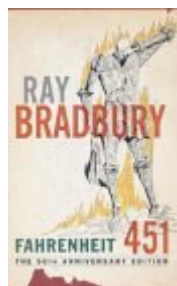
March 1, 2006 - April 8, 2006



### Participating Libraries

- Central Michigan University Libraries
- Mid-Michigan Comm. College Library
- Chippewa River District Library
- Pere Marquette District Library
- Harrison Community Library

Mid Michigan Reads is a program designed to encourage members of the community to read and discuss the book *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. We have begun what we hope will be an annual event for our communities.



The goal of the program is to promote reading and literacy and to involve members of the community in discussions facilitating communication of the issues of censorship, reality television, suicide and the dispossessed. One of the incentives to encourage involvement is that member organizations will provide free paperback editions of *Fahrenheit 451* for as many participants as possible. We will also have many circulating copies available as well as audio books on CD and cassette. And whether you read this classic many years ago or are trying it for the first time, we don't think you will be disappointed.

**From AudioFile's review:** Bradbury's novel details the eternal war between censorship and freedom of thought and continues to be relevant today more than ever. In Bradbury's future, books are illegal and happily so—citizens are too busy watching their wall-sized televisions and listening to their in-ear "seashell" radios to care about the loss of good literature. Guy Montag begins the novel as a fireman who enforces the temperature of the title – that at which books burn – but then transforms and tries to show his society the mistake of censorship.

7. Montag turns to books to rescue him; instead they help demolish his life—he loses his wife, job and home; he kills a man and is forced to be a nomad. Does he gain any benefits from books? If so, what are they?
8. Since the government is so opposed to readers, thinkers, walkers, and slow drivers, why does it allow the procession of men along the railroad tracks to exist?
9. Once Montag becomes a violent revolutionary, why does the government purposely capture an innocent man in his place instead of tracking down the real Montag? Might the government believe that Montag is no longer a threat?
10. Granger, spokesperson for the group on the railroad tracks, tells Montag, "Right now we have a horrible job; we're waiting for the war to begin and, as quickly, end...When the war's over, perhaps we can be of some use in the world." Based on what you've read of the world these men live in, do you believe that the books they carry inside themselves will make a difference?
11. What does Granger mean when he says, "We're going to go build a mirror factory first and put out nothing but mirrors for the next year and take a long time to look at them?" Why would "mirrors" be important in this new society?
12. Although Ray Bradbury's work is often referred to as science fiction, **Fahrenheit 451** has plenty to say about the world as it is, and not as it could be. How do you feel about the stands the author or characters take in **Fahrenheit 451** concerning:
  - conformity vs. individuality
  - freedom of speech and the consequences of losing it
  - the importance of remembering and understanding history
  - machines as helpers to humans, machines as hindrances or enemies

## Discussion Questions

1. Why would society make "being a pedestrian" a crime? (Clarisse tells Montag that her uncle was once arrested for this.)
2. One suicide and one near-suicide occur in this book. One woman, who shuns books but loves TV and driving fast in her car, anesthetizes herself; "We get these cases nine or ten a night," says the medical technician. Another woman, who cherishes her books, sets herself on fire with them; "These fanatics always try suicide," says the fire captain. Why would two people who seem to be so different from each other try to take their own lives? Why does suicide happen so frequently in Montag's society?"
3. Captain Beatty quotes history, scripture, poetry, philosophy. He is obviously a well-read man. Why hasn't he been punished? And why does he view the books he's read with such contempt?
4. Beatty tells Montag that firemen are "custodians of peace of mind" and that they stand against "those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought." How well are the firemen accomplishing these objectives? Are conflicting ideas the only source of unhappiness in their society? What other sources might there be? Can conflicting ideas exist even without books that have been destroyed and outlawed?
5. Why do you think the firemen's rulebook credited Benjamin Franklin~ writer, publisher, political leader, inventor, ambassador-as being the first fireman?
6. Why does Beatty program the Hound to track Montag even before Montag stole the book? Do you believe Beatty had seen him steal books before? Or is it that Beatty had detected a change in Montag's attitude or behavior?

## Events to spark your interest:

**Friday, March 24, 7pm**, Broadway Theater (Downtown Mt. Pleasant), read the book, see the film.



**Saturday, March 25, 7pm**, CMU Park Library Auditorium, Noted author/biographer, Sam Weller, *The Bradbury Chronicles* – with special call-in guest Ray Bradbury. "This is my life! It's as if somehow Sam Weller slipped into my skin and my head and my heart – it's all here." – Ray Bradbury

**Weeks of March 27 – April 7**, discussion groups at various library locations, more information to follow.

**Saturday, April 8, 7pm**, CRDL Library Annex, Community Conversation – an opportunity for lively discussion inspired by *Fahrenheit 451* about questions that matter to our community.



### About the Book

"Three years ago I wrote a short novel entitled 'The Fire Man' which told the story of a municipal department in the year 1999 that came to your house to **start** fires instead of to put them out.  
~Ray Bradbury, 1953

**Fahrenheit 451**, the 1953 reincarnation of "The Fire Man," presents ideas that are far more complex than that brief description indicates. This novel is a soothsayer, warning of a future populated by non-readers and non-thinkers; a lost people with no sense of their history. At the same time it salutes those who dedicate their lives to the preservation and passing on of knowledge, and testifies to the quiet or passionate courage of the rebel **with** a cause. **Fahrenheit 451** also poses questions about the role(s) of government: Should it reflect the will of the people? Should government do the people's thinking for them?

### About the Author

When Mr. Electrico, a magician with a traveling show, came to Waukegan, Illinois during the 1920s, a twelve year-old boy was among the lucky youngsters selected for a special honor. Once Mr. Electrico tapped young Ray Bradbury on the shoulder with a sword and directed him to "live forever," the boy "was changed forever. I will grow up, [he] though, and become like him. I will be the greatest magician who ever walked the world."

The boy went on collecting his Buck Rogers and Prince Valiant comics and reading the works of H.G. Wells and Edgar Rice Burroughs and when he moved with his parents and older brother to Tucson, Arizona in 1932, Ray read comic strips over the air on a radio show for children. He also began writing short stories in Tucson...

And he never stopped. In 1934 the family moved again, this time to Los Angeles. Here Ray won accolades from high school peers for his participation in and writing for theater. After graduation in 1938 he found himself a small office, sold his first story at age twenty, and before twenty-five was already selling a story a month, to **Weird Tales**, **Mademoiselle**, **Collier's** and others. Bradbury has since been published in such diverse publications as **The Saturday Evening Post**, **McCall's** and **Harpers**. An imaginative marketer of his stories, he would send and sell them to magazines that did not usually print fiction-**Gourmet** and **Life**, for example.

How much has he written? Take a clue from his words: "I'm accustomed, you see, to getting up every morning, running to the typewriter, and in an hour I've created a world." And from this, his advice to aspiring young writers: to start disciplining themselves early in their careers, he says, they should put down "one or two thousand words everyday for the next twenty years."

He has garnered many awards for his writings, including one from the National Institute of Arts and Letters for **Fahrenheit 451**, an Academy Award nomination for a 1963 short film, "Icarus Montgolfier Wright," and a World Fantasy Award for life achievement.